



## COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

### DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

#### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Virginia Receives Federal Emergency Energy Assistance Funds - \$3 million will help needy with home heating costs -**

**Richmond, VA** – Governor Mark R. Warner announced today the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) will receive additional funds totaling more than \$3 million to help low-income families with heating costs. The funds will come from \$99.4 million in Low-Income Home Energy Assistance emergency funds released by the federal government.

"Rising costs and increased demand for heating fuel impact the budgets of many low-income households," said Governor Warner. "Many citizens can not afford basic heating and cooling expenses, and these funds certainly will be put to good use."

The additional funds will supplement the crisis assistance component of the Energy Assistance Program administered by VDSS.

"No one should have to do without a basic ingredient for survival," said VDSS Commissioner Maurice A. Jones. "We need to help our most vulnerable citizens any way we can, and I am grateful they will benefit by the release of this additional money."

Low-income households can apply for crisis assistance at any of Virginia's 120 local departments of social services. Applications will be taken through March 15, 2004. The funds are available on a first-come, first-served basis.

The Energy Assistance Program is comprised of three components -- fuel (winter heating), crisis and cooling. The application period for fuel assistance has passed and that funding has been allocated, making crisis assistance the quickest way to provide assistance to low-income individuals.

The \$3 million in federal funds for crisis assistance will help pay for: security deposits; portable space heaters for temporary use; home heating fuel; heat utility bills; emergency shelter; and repair or purchase of heating equipment. This winter, more than 97,000 households were approved for fuel assistance by VDSS at an average benefit of \$195 per household. The state also has provided crisis assistance to more than 9,100 households, with an average benefit of \$317.

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